



To: Senate Committee on Education

From: Jay Nichols , Executive Director

Date: Feb 1, 2023

Subject: Minimum Teacher Pay Bill

Good afternoon, For the record, Jay Nichols , Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association. I've been asked to discuss my thoughts on the concept of having a minimum base salary for teachers in Vermont. I want to first mention that there is some federal legislation that was just reported on in Education Week, that would do just that. I personally feel that legislation has little or no chance of passing but have to say my preference would be for federal legislation to impose a minimum base annual salary for teachers. The link to that article is here:

Federal Legislation on \$60,000 base teacher pay

https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/whats-behind-the-push-for-a-60k-base-teacher-salary/2023/01?utm_source=nl&utm_medium=eml&utm_campaign=eu&M=6028135&UUID=76a423755a41b72a655c78960c332232&T=8116190

I've discussed with this committee before my increasingly elevated concerns about the educator pipeline nationally and more specifically in Vermont. An increase in base teacher pay certainly would be helpful in attracting people to the profession and retaining some of our newer educators who are woefully underpaid. However, the HOW we as a state would go about this without federal financial support concerns me even more than the WHAT at this point.

Some of the questions that I think the General Assembly needs to consider if they are serious in looking at legislation to raise minimum teacher salaries are as follows:

- Where will the funds come from? If they are just added on to local budgets it increases the likelihood that budgets will be voted down. This will especially impact the least resourced communities.

- Will local school districts be pressured to reduce services to students in other areas if they have to contend with increased teacher salaries?
- Is there some type of new revenue source that would be considered?

Some thoughts for consideration:

- Consider a state wide teachers contract negotiating process on Salary (as we already do on health care). Build in regional indexes that correspond with the cost of living in a given area. This flies in the face of “local control” but with a statewide education funding system perhaps it is time to make this move especially given declining enrollment and the difficulty we have attracting and retaining educators. Below is Hawaii’s Statewide Teacher Contract. It is 108 pages long.
 - <https://www.hsta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021-23-HSTA-CBA-FINAL-11.17.2021.pdf>
 - As a comparison linked below is a copy of the Burlington School District’s Teacher Contract which is 80 pages long and remember every school district has a contract with their Teacher’s Association.
<https://burlingtoneducationassociation.files.wordpress.com/2022/05/final-contract-fully-executed-01.25.2022-ocr-1.pdf>
- Any program that is designed should have a gradual implementation so as to not “shock” the system anymore than necessary.

The VPA agrees that starting teachers especially are underpaid in most parts of the state and that we need to address this. The average teacher pay in Vermont is better than the average pay of teachers in most other states nationally but is under that of other states that we compete with for teachers in Connecticut, Maine, New Jersey, and Massachusetts and about the same as Maine and New Hampshire.

We would be glad to work with the Legislature on any bill to be considered to improve the minimal salary of teachers in Vermont once we see the details.